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38th meeting
held on
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at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 38th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. SENGWE (Zimbabwe)

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. MSELLE

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

1. The CHAIRMAN said that, given that only one draft resolution had been fully approved in informal consultations to date, it seemed unlikely that the Committee would be in a position to approve a draft resolution or decision on each of the items under consideration by 17 December, the date on which the President of the General Assembly had stated that the main part of the fifty-first session must conclude. The Bureau had therefore decided to revise the programme of work for the remainder of the year and had deleted agenda item 111, the part of agenda item 112 dealing with procurement reform of the United Nations Secretariat, and the part of agenda item 116 dealing with the eighth performance report on the Integrated Management Information System (IMIS). Furthermore, concerning agenda item 141 (Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the Office of Internal Oversight Services) since the draft resolution circulated by the Coordinator was of a purely procedural nature, the Bureau had decided to give the Coordinator one further opportunity to complete consultations on the item. Otherwise the item would have to be deferred to the following year. The same held true for agenda item 120 on human resources management.

2. The Bureau had further proposed setting a 10-minute time limit for the delivery of statements from delegations and the Secretariat alike.

3. Ms. PEÑA (Mexico) asked whether a decision would be taken on agenda items 121 and 122 regarding the common system and pension system. Her delegation was prepared to accept the 10-minute time limit, but only until the end of the main part of the fifty-first session.

4. The CHAIRMAN said that both those agenda items contained elements which had to be considered before the end of 1996, namely the budget of the Pension Board and the question of salaries.

5. Ms. GOICOCHEA (Cuba) said that since the recommendations of the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) had direct budgetary implications, a decision on that matter was closely linked to the negotiations on agenda item 116 regarding the programme budget.

6. Mr. ODAGA JALOMAYO (Uganda) said that his delegation had noted the Chairman's comments with regard to the 10-minute time limit, but stressed that measures designed to speed up the work of the Committee should never override the need for detailed question-and-answer sessions that were necessarily more time-consuming.

7. Mr. ATIYANTO (Indonesia) said that his delegation endorsed the comment made by the Cuban delegation with regard to agenda item 121. The Chairman should also provide further information on the Committee's intentions with regard to agenda item 115 on improving the financial situation of the Organization. He reminded the Committee that since the current year was one in which personnel matters were discussed, some progress should be made on the question of human resources management.

8. Mr. KELLY (Ireland) said that the Coordinator for agenda item 120 should make one last effort to frame a consensus resolution. Having noted that the tentative programme of work for the period 9-17 December 1996 included three sets of informal consultations on the question of human resources management, his delegation wondered whether, if no tangible progress was made during the first round of consultations, the remaining time slots could be devoted to other priority items.

9. Mr. STOCKL (Germany) agreed that the Committee should make a special effort to reach agreement on item 120. He proposed that at the next informal meeting on the question of human resources management, delegations should focus on such pressing issues as the recruitment freeze, vacancies and the delegation of authority. Depending on what emerged from that meeting, the Committee could then decide whether it was worth continuing its discussion of that item.

10. Mr. BISTA (Nepal) noting that consideration of agenda item 140 had been moved back, said that his delegation would appreciate further information on the Advisory Committee's position with regard to the Secretary-General's report on the administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of United Nations peacekeeping operations.

11. Ms. INCERA (Costa Rica), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, supported by Mr. ODAGA JALOMAYO (Uganda), Ms. GOICOCHEA (Cuba), Mr. YANG Yuhui (China) and Mr. MIRMOHAMMAD (Islamic Republic of Iran), endorsed the Bureau's proposals to defer consideration of agenda item 111 on the reports of the Board of Auditors and to continue seeking consensus on the Secretary-General's report on the activities of the Office of Internal Oversight Services. She also endorsed the proposal put forward by the German delegation on agenda item 120.

12. Ms. ALMAO (New Zealand) said that since agenda items 121 and 122 impacted directly on the budget, any spare time which the Committee might have should be devoted to those items.

13. Mr. ACAKPO-SATCHIVI (Secretary of the Committee) responding to the comments of the Nepalese delegation, said that since there was not enough time to examine all the relevant documentation, the Committee had decided to review all aspects of agenda item 140 at subsequent meetings in 1997. It had, however, decided to give priority to consideration of issues relating to the scale of assessments for peacekeeping operations concerning the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Zambia. The Bureau had entrusted the matter to the Coordinator for agenda item 140 and, since consultations were currently still under way, had decided to take it up at the end of the main part of the fifty-first session.

14. Assuming that the Nepalese concern centred around loaned officers, he said that the relevant report had been issued some time previously and had been submitted to the Advisory Committee. Unfortunately the Advisory Committee had been very busy and had been unable to examine the report in depth. Consequently that report would also be taken up during subsequent meetings in 1997.

15. Ms. PEÑA (Mexico) said that her delegation was not aware that the Coordinator for agenda item 140 had even begun consultations on the scale of assessments. If such consultations had indeed begun, she requested the

Secretariat to ensure that delegations were kept better informed. Greater transparency was clearly required.

16. Mr. MADDENS (Belgium), speaking as Coordinator for agenda item 140, said that since all matters relating to the scale of assessments for peacekeeping operations were extremely sensitive, it had been his intention to consult as widely as possible in order to get a feel for the views of the Committee as a whole. He had therefore requested the Bureau to postpone informal consultations until the end of the main part of the fifty-first session.

17. Mr. BISTA (Nepal) said that he had simply wished to know whether there would be any discussion of the death and disability issue during the main part of the fifty-first session. He felt that if a delegation had expressed concern about a certain item it should, at least, be consulted before the item was deferred or put on hold.

18. Mr. HO (Singapore) said that he was appalled by the lack of transparency with respect to the consultations on agenda item 140. He would not accept any fait accompli presented to the General Assembly for adoption one day before the end of the session.

19. Ms. GOICOCHEA (Cuba) endorsed the views expressed by previous speakers and said that the consultations under way should be open and transparent. She, too, would not accept a fait accompli put before the Committee.

20. Ms. INCERA (Costa Rica) endorsed the views expressed by previous speakers.

21. Mr. BOHAYEVSKY (Ukraine) said that his delegation generally endorsed the proposals of the Group of 77 and others. In his view, the Committee should concentrate on the issues that had either already been discussed or were pending such as the programme budget and the scale of assessments. It would not be realistic for it to take up new issues.

22. Mr. SIAL (Pakistan) expressed concern about the lack of transparency with respect to the informal informal consultations on agenda item 140, especially since his country was the largest troop contributor. He hoped that in future all interested delegations would be consulted.

23. Mr. MOKTEFI (Algeria) said that his delegation took a strong exception to the way in which informal consultations were being conducted. Any informal informal consultations should be announced either during the Committee's meetings or through notices posted in Conference Room 5.

24. The CHAIRMAN pointed out that the Committee was discussing the financial aspects of contributions to the peacekeeping budget, and not troop contributions, adding, however, that all the concerns expressed on agenda item 140 would be addressed.

25. Mr. MIRMOHAMMAD (Islamic Republic of Iran), speaking with regard to agenda item 116, asked the Secretariat to clarify the status of document A/C.5/50/71 on the restructuring of the Centre for Human Rights.

26. Mr. TAKASU (Controller) replied that the Secretary-General's report on Restructuring the Centre for Human Rights (A/C.5/50/71) had been submitted in June 1996 in response to one of the provisions of General Assembly resolution 50/214 that the Secretary-General should report on the appropriate level and distribution of resources for the Centre for Human Rights. It was listed in the Committee's work programme in the context of the programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997. The Committee could therefore refer to it in that context.

27. Mr. ODAGA JALOMAYO (Uganda) asked whether some of the proposals in the report were already being implemented.

28. Mr. TAKASU (Controller) said that the restructuring of the Centre for Human Rights had been proceeding since the publication of the report. Since 1 October 1996, the High Commissioner for Human Rights had been reorganizing the staffing of the Centre with a view to instituting a new, focused structure by April 1997. The restructuring effort was being conducted in a transparent manner and the next budget proposals would reflect the Centre's new structure.

29. Mr. ODAGA JALOMAYO (Uganda) asked which aspects of the restructuring had been implemented, the extent to which there had been transparency and whether the restructuring had been mandated.

30. Ms. GOICOCHEA (Cuba) said that the issue of the Centre's restructuring was not only very relevant in the context of agenda item 116 but was also closely linked to other agenda items. It was regrettable that the intergovernmental decision-making process had been sidetracked and that the restructuring had proceeded without the General Assembly being informed.

31. Mr. KELLY (Ireland) said that the Committee had been informed of the High Commissioner's plans. Indeed, the relevant resolution on the Centre had not stipulated that the restructuring should be conditional upon the Committee's approval. The High Commissioner, as overall head of the Centre, was acting entirely within his competence. With respect to the concern raised by the representative of Cuba, he drew attention to the resolution of the Third Committee at the current session, by which the General Assembly had fully supported the restructuring of the Centre.

32. Mr. MOKTEFI (Algeria) said that he shared the concerns of the representatives of Uganda and Cuba and was very sceptical about how the entire restructuring exercise was being conducted. There were major political and budgetary implications which he intended to take up during the Committee's informal meetings.

33. Ms. GOICOCHEA (Cuba) endorsed the statement made by the representative of Ireland. She favoured an in-depth analysis of the restructuring of the Centre for Human Rights and would wait for a definitive review on the matter.

34. The CHAIRMAN said that he had taken note of the concerns of delegations on the issue.

35. He would take it that the Committee wished to proceed in accordance with the timetable submitted by the Bureau, as amended by the Committee, for the period 9 to 17 December 1996.

36. It was so decided.

37. Ms. ARAGON (Philippines), speaking as Coordinator for agenda item 141, said that the draft resolution on that item had been circulated together with the written information requested by delegations. The delegations concerned could submit any proposed amendments to the draft prior to the informal meeting on the subject.

38. Mr. GJESDAL (Norway), reporting on the consultations on the United Nations scale of assessments, said that six informal meetings had been held to prepare a draft resolution on the guidance to be given to the Committee on Contributions on the preparation of a new scale of assessments for the United Nations for 1998-2000 and that two more were scheduled. Based on the recommendations of the Committee on Contributions, a draft text had been presented, some 20 paragraphs of which had yet to be considered. The main stumbling blocks in the consultations concerned the differing interests with respect to the various elements used to determine Member States' assessments and with respect to the desirable pace and scope of reform of the scale, and whether or not a shorter or longer-term view should be taken. He urged delegations to negotiate in good faith and to reach agreement without a vote, adding that the new scale should apply not only to the United Nations but to the entire United Nations system.

The meeting rose at 11.35 a.m.